

CONFIDENTIAL Department of State

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

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ACTION NEA-11

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 OODE-00 PH-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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C R 201035Z FEB 79
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2316
INFO USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 1267

E.O. 12065: GDS 2-28-85 (FLATIN, BRUCE A) OR-H
TAGS: ASEC, PEPR, PINS, AF, UR, US, PINR
SUBJ: AMERICAN AND BRITISH JOURNALISTS MEET WITH HAFIZULLAH
AMIN ON FEBRUARY 19

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. ON THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 19, A GROUP OF SIX JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING TOM LIPPHAN OF THE "WASHINGTON POST," RON MOREAU OF "NEWSWEEK," BARRY SCHLACTER OF ASSOCIATED PRESS, OAVI HOUSEGO OF THE "FINANCIAL TIMES," LESLIE MURPHY OF REUTERS, AND TULLY OF BBC, HAS A PRESS CONFERENCE WITH HAFIZULLAH AMIN, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER. AMIN USED A PUSHTU INTERPRETER, WHICH IS NOT HIS STANDARD PRACTICE. AMIN, A GRADUATE OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, CORRECTED THE INTERPRETER'S ENGLISH SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE MEETING. THE JOURNALISTS FELT THE INTERPRETER WAS OBVIOUSLY THERE AS A SHIELD TO ALLOW AMIN, WHO SPEAKS GOOD ENGLISH, TIME TO PHRASE CAREFULLY THOUGHT-OUT REPLIES. THE CONVERSATION WAS RECORDED BY MFA OFFICIALS, BUT NO JOURNALIST WAS ALLOWED TO USE A RECORDER.

3. REGARDING THE ASSASSINATION OF AMBASSADOR DUBS, AMIN HAD THE FOLLOWING TO SAY. HE REJECTED AS "COMPLETELY BASE-LESS" AMERICAN PROTESTS OF AFGHAN HANDLING OF INCIDENT. HE SAID "I SEE NO ASPECT OF THE OPERATION FOR WHICH WE CAN BE BLAMED". HE REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AFGHAN AUTHORITIES HAD BEEN DEFICIENT IN ANY WAY. HE STRESSED THAT DRA STILL WANTS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., DESPITE THE AMBASSADOR'S MURDER, AND SAID "I DO NOT WANT TO COMMENT ON WHATEVER CONCLUSIONS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAY COME TO, BUT FOR OUR OWN GOVERNMENT I CAN SAY THIS: THE ACTIONS OF THE AFGHAN AUTHORITIES WERE COMPLETELY AIMED AT RELEASING THE AMBASSADOR UNHARMED AND WERE INSPIRED BY FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. OUR MEASURES WERE COMPLETELY THOSE OF FRIENDSHIP, BOTH DURING THE INCIDENT AND AFTERWARD DURING THE CEREMONIES". AMIN SAID FURTHER THAT HE "CATEGORICALLY REJECTS" AMERICAN ACCUSATIONS THAT HE AVOIDED U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS OR HAD BEEN OUT OF TOUCH DURING THE SIEGE AT THE HOTEL. HE TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT NOBODY FROM THE EMBASSY ATTEMPTED TO CONTACT HIM UNTIL THREE HOURS AFTER AMBASSADOR DUBS WAS ABDUCTED. (EMBASSY COMMENT: THIS IS TECHNICALLY TRUE. WE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT EARLIER WITH CHIEF OF PROTOCOL MANOOZAI AND DEFORMIN OOST, AND CHARGE DID NOT ATTEMPT TO REACH AMIN UNTIL ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE AMBASSADOR DUBS' DEATH OCCURRED, WHEN IT APPEARED THE DRA WAS PLANNING FORCED ACTION. THE KEY POINT IS THAT AMIN WAS UNAVAILABLE WHEN I ASKED TO SPEAK TO HIM AND IN DESPERATION I SENT, TO NO AVAIL, AN OFFICER TO THE PALACE TO TRY TO GAIN ENTREE TO HIM.) HE SAID THAT HIS SUBORDINATES HAD BEEN AVAILABLE TO U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS THE WHOLE TIME. (EMBASSY COMMENT: TAROON REFUSED TO SEE AN EMBASSY OFFICER WAITING OUTSIDE HIS OFFICE, AFTER ABOUT 1100 HOURS.)

HE SAID "I WAS AVAILABLE, BUT NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE TO REACH ME. (EMBASSY COMMENT: A LIE.) WHAT COULD THEY (U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS) HAVE SAID TO ME THAT THEY COULD NOT HAVE SAID TO MY SUBORDINATES?" (EMBASSY COMMENT: THE EMBASSY WANTED DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE CHIEF DECISION-MAKER, NOT WITH FLUNKIES WHO WERE OBVIOUSLY TOLD TO CALM US AND KEEP US AWAY FROM HIM.) HE TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT HE HAD BEEN AT THE HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE ALL MORNING UNTIL 12:15 P.M. THEN HE HAD GONE TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. FROM THERE HE WENT TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, AND THEN RETURNED TO THE HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE. (EMBASSY COMMENT: AMIN'S CHIEF OF CABINET, DR. MOHAMMAD AKBAR MEHR, CONSTANTLY LIED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS ABOUT AMIN'S WHEREABOUTS.)

4. AMIN, LIKE POLICE COMMANDANT TAROON, REJECTED AMERICAN ACCUSATIONS THAT SOVIET ADVISORS AT THE HOTEL HAD AIDED AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES OR HAD GIVEN THEM ANY INSTRUCTIONS.

5. HE COMMENTED THAT THE DRA HAD INFORMED THE AMERICAN EMBASSY THREE MONTHS AGO THAT THE AMBASSADOR WAS BEING FOLLOWED AND OFFERED TO PROVIDE A POLICE ESCORT, BUT THAT THE EMBASSY HAD REJECTED THIS OFFER. (EMBASSY COMMENT: NEITHER THE CHARGE, THE RSO, NOR ANY OTHER OFFICER AT THIS EMBASSY RECALL SUCH A "WARNING" AND OFFER OF POLICE ESCORT SERVICES.)

6. AMIN SAID FURTHER THAT THE AMBASSADOR SHOULD NEVER HAVE STOPPED HIS CAR. DIPLOMATIC CARS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO POLICE SEARCHES. THE JOURNALISTS FELT THAT AMIN'S TONE OF VOICE AND INNUENDO MEANT THAT HE WAS SAYING THE AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN JUST PLAIN STUPID AND OBSTINATE.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *MA Cyren* DATE *3-13-81*

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25 APRIL 1981

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O R 201035Z FEB 79
FM AMEMBASSY KATHM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACI IMMEDIATE 2317
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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KABUL 1267

7. COMMENTING ON THE TERRORISTS, AMIN SAID THAT, JUDGING FROM THEIR ACCENTS AND THE WAY THEY HAD TALKED, THEY WERE "INTELLECTUALS". JOURNALISTS ASKED HIM IF THEY HAD BEEN AFFILIATED WITH AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE SETAN-I-MILLI ("OPPRESSED NATION"). HE BECAME MUMBLING FOR THE ONLY TIME DURING THEIR MEETING. HE STUMBLER IN HIS ANSWER ACCORDING TO MARK TULLY, BBC CORRESPONDENT. HE STATED THAT THEY HAD BEEN UNDER "FOREIGN INFLUENCE". WHEN PRESSED BY DAVID HOUSEGO OF THE "FINANCIAL TIMES" ABOUT THIS, AMIN IMPLIED STRONGLY, BUT NEVER DIRECTLY STATED THAT THE TERRORISTS COULD HAVE BEEN AFFILIATED WITH THE SETAN-I-MILLI. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THIS GROUP WERE PRO-CHINESE, AMIN DID NOT ANSWER, BUT CRACKED A BIG SMILE. HE CLAIMED THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE TERRORISTS HAD BEEN FROM BADAKHSHAN PROVINCE. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE MAN SEEN KICKING POLICE OFFICIALS IN THE LOBBY OF THE KABUL HOTEL BY TWO AMERICAN TOURISTS WHO HAD RETURNED THERE FOLLOWING THE SHOOTOUT, AMIN SAID HE WAS NOT ONE OF THE FOUR TERRORISTS. (#)

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THE POLICE BRINGING DOWN THREE PERSONS. TWO HAD BEEN CARRIED.

THE THIRD HAD BEEN HELD BY SEVERAL MEN AND WAS ATTEMPTING TO KICK THEM IN THEIR GROINS.) AMIN CLAIMED THAT THE FOUR MEN KILLED WERE THE FOUR TERRORISTS.

8. AMIN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD MET WITH THE AMERICAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES EARLIER THAT DAY (FEBRUARY 19), BUT HE REFUSED TO COMMENT UPON THE SUBSTANCE OF THEIR MEETING.

HOUSEGO PRESSED AMIN ON WHETHER HIS BEHAVIOR AND THAT OF THE DRA WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SAME HAD IT BEEN THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR WHO WAS KILLED. AMIN EQUIVOCATED, THEN SMILED AND SAID HE DID NOT KNOW, BECAUSE "THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IS STILL ALIVE".

10. TOM LIPPAN COMMENTED ON AMIN'S SPEECH CONCERNING DRA FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE VISIT OF IRAQI FOREIGN MINISTER HAMIDI AND SAID THAT IT DID NOT DIFFER ONE BIT FROM SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY ON MAJOR ISSUES. HE THEN ASKED AMIN IF THERE WAS INDEED ANY POINT WHERE AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY DIFFERED FROM THAT OF THE SOVIET UNION. AMIN GRINNED AND REPLIED "WE ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE WARSAW PACT".

11. THE JOURNALISTS CAME AWAY FROM THE MEETING FEELING THAT AMIN WAS BASICALLY CYNICAL ABOUT THE ASSASSINATION OF AMBASSADOR DUBS. HE PAID LIP SERVICE TO MAINTAINING FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., BUT, THEY FELT, HE REALLY SEEMED INDIFFERENT ON THAT POINT.

12. AT 10 P.M. LOCAL TIME FEBRUARY 19 RADIO AFGHANISTAN CARRIED THE ENTIRE INTERVIEW IN A DARI-LANGUAGE VERSION. NO FULL TEXT HAS APPEARED IN ANY LOCAL NEWSPAPERS YET. AMSTUTZ

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) OMISSION CORRECTION TO FOLLOW. TEXT AS RECEIVED.

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CORRECTED COPY FOR TEXT

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